

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

The President's Two Visitors

WHILE NEITHER of the two official visits to Washington this week, that of the British Prime Minister and of the German Chancellor, resulted in any important decision or agreement, they opened up at least a glimpse of the shape of things to come.



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THIS WAS most plain in what Mr. Wilson had to say about the conclusions arrived at in London after their careful review of Great Britain's military capacity, which they have been carrying on since the Labor government took office. In substance, Mr. Wilson informed us, as Mr. Henry Brandon put it in a dispatch from Washington to the London Sunday Times, that "Britain is no longer prepared to maintain a self-contained force with its own weapons, bases and command structure East of Suez. Instead, the Prime Minister has proposed a new collective force to which Britain, America, Australia and New Zealand would contribute." I think we are justified in crossing the t's and dotting the i's in this obviously informed report. The President was told that Great Britain feels compelled to withdraw from Aden and Singapore on the Asian mainland and to fall back upon a joint base for sea and air power in Australia.

I have been told that Mr. Wilson, realizing how sensitive the President must be about withdrawals from the Asian mainland, did not emphasize the British decision to withdraw from Singapore because it has become a military liability. But the fact is that eventual military withdrawal from the Asian mainland is the direction in which Great Britain is going. Thus, we are approaching the time when, if we continue to think that we have to be based on

the mainland, we shall be the only non-Asian power, except for the Russians, with a military position which is not separated from Asia by blue water.

CHANCELLOR Erhard's visit to Washington raised more questions than it answered. It is the unanswered, perhaps the unanswerable, question which is the most interesting. It is obvious from the official communique that the President and the Chancellor intended to be ambiguous when they agreed that Germany "should have an appropriate part in nuclear defense." For some of his party believe that Germany will not have an "appropriate" part unless it actually owns a piece of the nuclear force. There are other people in the Bonn government and in Germany, by all indications a great many more, who will settle for participation in the strategic planning of the United States nuclear deterrent.

The real unanswered question is why the German Chancellor and the Foreign Minister thought it desirable to argue that Germany should own a share of some kind of nuclear force. In the communique they reaffirmed the German undertaking given in 1954 not to produce or acquire nuclear weapons. Moreover, they affirmed that the United States should have the ultimate veto in the use of any nuclear force in which the Federal Republic owns a share.

Why then, one is bound to ask, does it matter whether or not the Federal Republic is the legal owner of a share of a nuclear deterrent which it can never use without the approval of the United States?

WHY, indeed? For my own part I have never heard the question answered by any German or American supporter of any of the schemes, and it is obvious that, without some rational explanation of what is apparently an irrational demand, the whole affair kicks up a cloud of anti-German suspicion. The Germans, it seems, can-

not be asking to be allowed to buy shares in a project which they write off as an instrument of no military value to the Germans.

The most common explanation is that the Federal Republic would be buying status, would feel that it was recognized as a first-class power, would feel that its pride was satisfied. I cannot believe that the Germans are capable of deceiving themselves to such an extent, that they think the world will regard them as a nuclear power because they own the legal shares and yet will not be afraid of them because they cannot use the nuclear weapons.

Failing an intelligible explanation, one has to examine the theory that the German politicians who have pushed the nuclear business hope to get something different. It may well be that the Germans feel somewhat, as does General de Gaulle, that the United States interest in Europe is bound to decline. They are pressing President Johnson to let them buy into nuclear hardware at the risk of an irreconcilable quarrel with the Soviet Union and France. Are they perhaps hoping that he will extricate himself from the pressure of their demands by committing himself again and again to treating the Federal Republic as the favorite super-special ally of the United States?

There may be something in this theory, especially when the politicians in Bonn hear too often from those Americans who regularly have been more German than the Germans themselves. But I do not take the theory too seriously. For I am convinced that post-Hitler Germany is profoundly peaceable and unadventurous, and that the true line of German policy does not have to do with nuclear weapons and special relationships, but with the conciliation of Eastern Europe as the way to the reunification of Germany and of Europe as a whole.